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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/I AND NEA/IR
NSC STAFF FOR OLLIVANT AND MAGSAMEN

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [MOPS](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: IRAN IN IRAQ: STRATEGY FOR PRESSURING IRGC-QF

REF: A. 07 BAGHDAD 150
[1](#)B. 07 BAGHDAD 488
[1](#)C. BAGHDAD 289

Classified By: Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Patricia A. Butenis for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Summary: Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps - Quds Force (IRGC-QF) officers are active in Iraq, conducting traditional espionage and supporting violent extremists as well as supporting both legitimate and malign Iranian economic and cultural outreach. Iraqis and their government have demonstrated increasing willingness to push back against malign Iranian influence in the last year. Working with the Iraqis, we have succeeded in stopping some IRGC-QF activity through military operations and diplomatic engagement, while we prevented some IRGC-QF officers from entering Iraq through explicit warnings that we would target them unilaterally. However, under the Security Agreement effective January 1, all operations in Iraq must be conducted in conjunction with Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), and our previous unilateral warnings carry less weight. As Coalition Forces continue the period of responsible drawdown, we will rely increasingly on the GOI to keep the pressure on the IRGC-QF. We intend to support the GOI in these efforts through continued diplomatic engagement, intelligence sharing, and our security partnership of Coalition Forces working by, with, and through the ISF. End summary.

Background:

[1](#)2. (S/NF) IRGC-QF leadership took advantage of the vacuum which surrounded the fall of Saddam Hussein and the entry of Coalition Forces into Iraq in 2003, using the opportunity to send operatives to Iraq when little attention was focused on Iran. In January 2007, Coalition Forces raided an unofficial Iranian consulate in Erbil, detaining five Iranians who claimed to be diplomats but in reality held no diplomatic status. They were suspected of operations aimed at killing Coalition and Iraqi security forces (refs A and B). The original targets of the raid, IRGC-QF officers Abbas Hoseyni (of the Erbil office) and Hormat Faruqi (of the Sulaimaniyah office), escaped and fled to Iran. The Iranian government immediately pulled back most IRGC-QF officers from Iraq and shuttered its "consulates" in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah until mid-2007; consulates in Basrah and Karbala remained open. Since 2007, Iran has submitted diplomatic visa applications for Hoseini and Faruqi to return to Iraq. In 2008 the Embassy and MNF-I convinced the GOI not to approve these applications, making it clear if they returned to Iraq, they would be targeted by Coalition Forces.

[1](#)3. (S/NF) Since 2008, the MFA has passed names of Iranians applying for diplomatic visas to the US Embassy for vetting.

Background checks have revealed that about 20 percent have possible ties to the IRGC or Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) (ref C). The MFA has informed us that it denies visas to all new suspected intelligence officers, but we have not been able to verify such claims. In January 2009, the MFA passed a list of 35 names to the USG of Iranian diplomats already in country before the vetting process began. Of those, eight had ties to IRGC or MOIS.

Strategy

¶4. (S/NF) As U.S. forces continue a period of responsible draw down, we will seek to ensure that the GOI understands that IRGC-QF activity harms Iraq -- which should be self-evident if the IRGC-QF continues to conduct malign activity that targets Iraqi citizens and infrastructure. Qactivity that targets Iraqi citizens and infrastructure. Engagements with political and security leadership at the national and provincial level, intelligence sharing, and security cooperation will be key to explaining the dangers of IRGC-QF activity and providing Iraqis the information they need to defend their own interests. The following are diplomatic, political, military, intelligence, and public information options which either the GOI can pursue unilaterally, or in concert with the USG, to target IRGC-QF activity in Iraq.

Diplomacy

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¶5. (S/NF) We intend to continue working closely with the MFA to deny visas to Iranian intelligence officers. We may also consider suggesting that the MFA use another diplomatic tool, albeit one with more consequences -- the "persona non grata" designation. The MFA may be reluctant to take this step because Iraqi diplomats in Iran would face retaliation and the dispute would inevitably become public. Since the fall of Saddam, the GOI has avoided most public disagreements with Iran.

Security Partnership

¶6. (S/NF) The role of the ISF in countering IRGC-QF in Iraq is critical, yet complex. We can encourage the Iraqi Army to take the lead on kinetic action against IRGC-QF agents, with Iraqi police monitoring and reacting to suspicious activity at the local level. We intend to continue to strengthen our partnership with the ISF to counter pro-Iranian elements who have infiltrated the security forces such as Kata'ib Hizbollah and Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq. While the US combat mission will end by August 31, 2009, we will continue to assist the Ministry of Defense (MOD) with training, equipment, mentoring and other bilateral military-to-military programs and engagements. Military sales, such as the recent Iraqi interest in purchasing F-16s and plans to transition from AK-47 to M-4 rifles, will increase US influence through training and support in Iraq for years to come, although the MOD will continue to consider weapons purchases from other sources as well.

Border Controls

¶7. (S) The Department of Border Enforcement (DBE) can help limit IRGC-QF activity by combating smuggling and scrutinizing people and cargo crossing legitimate routes from Iran into Iraq. XXXXXXXXXXXXX corruption at the ports of entry (POEs), unwillingness of inspectors to

do their jobs, and poor leadership and professionalism at the supervisory level keep the DBE from being fully effective. The USG can assist, however. Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System (PISCES), which checks travelers' biographic data, is already in use at many land and air POEs around Iraq. Additional training at sea ports, airports, and land borders could help Iraqi officials detect smugglers of cash, weapons, weapons components and other contraband. An Iranian IRGC-QF officer was briefly detained at Baghdad International Airport in November 2008 when his name was flagged in PISCES. In January 2009, KRG's Minister of the Interior Karim Sinjari praised PISCES and asked for the system at two more land border entry points the KRG shares with Iran, Khalil Ibrahim and Hadjer Meran.

18. (S) As of April 2009, there were 200 PISCES units in operation at 15 different POEs in Iraq. Current guidance states that every traveler entering or exiting Iraq is processed through PISCES. On occasion however, travelers will pay a small "fee" to enter or exit without going through PISCES. If a potential match is found to someone on the "stop list," the screen freezes, and only INIS can unlock the screen and conduct a secondary inspection. INIS notifies the GOI or USG when the identity of a wanted person is confirmed. PISCES is operated by Immigration officers assigned to the Department of Travel and Nationality, and the GOI will continue to use PISCES after the military drawdown. Collection and storage of biometric data is another tool the GOI is already using at POEs, although Biometric Automated Toolset (BAT) system is run by U.S. forces and will not stay in Iraq after their departure.

19. (S/NF) A timely example of cooperation with DBE in countering Iranian lethal aid smuggling occurred April 14. A DBE brigade in Maysan Province, partnered with Multi-National Division-South (MND-S) forces, captured an unmanned boat carrying explosive devices floating in the Huwayza Marsh. The patrol found three explosively formed projectiles (EFPs) and other military equipment. MND-S said it was the first time the DBE had reported success against this type of smuggling.

Intelligence Sharing

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110. (S/NF) Coordinating with GOI intelligence agencies to stop IRGC-QF activity is complicated by the fact that the Iraqi intelligence establishment is extremely fragmented. Intelligence offices affiliated with the Ministry of the Interior (MOI), DBE, and the Ministry of State for National Security Affairs (MSNSA) do not trust each other and often work in opposition. The USG could further assist Iraqi intelligence by negotiating and approving a bilateral US-Iraqi intelligence sharing agreements and further providing the GOI with intelligence that demonstrates the involvement of IRGC-QF officers in lethal assistance to extremists. US Forces in Iraq have established positive relationships with their ISF counterparts and are developing appropriate intelligence-sharing mechanisms. The USG can also assist the GOI to further develop its intelligence infrastructure to monitor malign Iranian influence and counter the IRGC-QF. INIS currently interacts closely with the Office of Regional Affairs (ORA). The establishment of a Defense Attach's Office at the Embassy will also help facilitate intelligence sharing and is under consideration by Chief of Mission.

Public Information

111. (S/NF) Highlighting nefarious Iranian activity to GOI

leadership and the Iraqi public has had a significant impact on increasing GOI willingness to confront Iran, as well as public rejection of Iranian attempts to dominate Iraq's political and economic sectors. Provincial elections demonstrated that perceived fealty to Iran is a political liability for Iraqi politicians, and they are increasingly sensitive to it. Continued USG assistance in uncovering and publicizing Iranian attempts to influence events in Iraq will make the country a much more inhospitable environment for IRGC-QF operatives.

Comment

112. (S/NF) The Iranian government may sense that the drawdown of U.S. military forces in Iraq presents an opportunity to expand IRGC-QF activity, although the broader regional dynamic will undoubtedly also influence Iranian decision making. Without the ability to conduct unilateral military action against IRGC-QF operatives in Iraq, we will leverage our evolving diplomatic, intelligence, security, and military partnerships with Iraq to maintain pressure. Many USG agencies will be involved in assisting the Iraqis in this critical area, and must actively engage in order to counter IRGC-QF officers and their lethal aid.
BUTENIS